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CNO Excited About Shaping the Force of the Future

BY: Andrea V. Houck

SAN DIEGO – The Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Vern Clark, said that the Navy can optimize for the future by partnering with industry at WEST 2005, the year's largest event on the West Coast for communications, electronics, intelligence, information systems, imaging, military weapon systems, aviation, shipbuilding and more.



Adm. Vern Clark, CNO, said, "We can talk about transformation, but we can't do it until we come to grips with what kinds of conflicts are we going to face and what are the tasks and missions we will be given," at WEST 2005.

Praising the conference's theme, "Beyond Iraq: How Do We Get Transformation Right," the CNO discussed the significance of building a "new strategic construct" for the future of the Navy. According to Clark, the days of major naval engagements have passed – at least for now – and that concerns such as missile defense and close-shore operations are encouraging structural changes in Navy force sets.

Clark said, "The Navy is configured to meet a blue-water threat. While we need to retain the ability to deal with traditional conflict, we need to reshape our force structure to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

"The task for us is to come to grips with the principles that we believe in and identifying the kinds of things that we think are going to drive transformation in our future."

According to Clark, transformation occurs only when faced with decisions of modernization, and the Navy is looking for industry's recommendations on how to optimize for the future.

"We cannot get there if we do not create the kind of partnerships with industry and organizations like this that will take us to that future," Clark replied.

Clark said the Navy has to design a force structure specifically for asymmetric conflicts. The key to that is defining the capabilities needed to counter asymmetrical threats.

"We can talk about transformation, but we can't do it until we come to grips with what kinds of conflicts are we going to face, what are the tasks and missions we will be given, what will be the mix between state and nonstate actors, and other questions," Clark said.

He said he envisions the restructured military as a more integrated, distributed force that is technologically advanced and networked to achieve a high degree of effectiveness when called to act.

Clark discussed the importance of rapidly repositioning and maneuvering in a distributed force concept where the individual is in the center of the combat system.

“If we don’t have the capability to net and put the individual in the center of our combat system, we won’t bring the capability to the nation,” said Clark.

Clark discussed the characteristics that will enable the Navy to shape its structure to deal with the kind of uncertainties that the United States faces. He defined those characteristics to be lethality, speed, agility, flexibility, and precision.

“Precision must be more carefully and more widely applied in every aspect of our business than it has been in the past,” said Clark.

The CNO’s message was delivered during the WEST 2005 keynote luncheon, co-sponsored by the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association’s International Chapter and the U.S. Naval Institute, on Feb. 1. With more than 350 defense and information technology exhibitors attended the event, which is held annually at the San Diego Convention Center.

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